

National Forest Service, Forest Plan Revision  
Preliminary “Need To Change” January workshops  
Tribal Input Report  
**Sierra National Forest Tribal Meeting**  
January 13, 2014

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy

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## Introduction

The Sierra National Forest (SNF) Tribal Meeting regarding the Forest Plan Revision preliminary “Need to Change” was held on January 13 at the Sierra National Forest Supervisor’s Office in Clovis, CA. Fifteen individuals representing seven tribes and/or tribal organizations (Big Sandy Rancheria, Dunlap Band of Mono Indians, Mono Nation, North Fork Mono Tribe, North Fork Rancheria, Picayune Rancheria, and Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation) attended.

The meeting opened with a welcome from Sierra Forest Supervisor Dean Gould. The agenda included remarks by Region 5 Tribal Coordinator Bob Goodwin and Sierra National Forest Tribal Liaison Dirk Charley; followed by presentations, discussion, and questions and answers regarding Forest Plan Revision, the preliminary “Need to Change” document, desired conditions for the Forest, and the unique roles and contributions of the Forest. The presenters were members of the Regional Planning Team Deb Whitall, Acting Director of Planning for Forest Service Region 5; Jo Ann Fites-Kaufman, Ecologist, U.S. Forest Service; Mary Cole, Landscape Architect, Sequoia National Forest; and Mark Metcalfe, Economist, U.S. Forest Service. Meeting materials and presentations are posted to the Region 5 Planning website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r5/landmanagement/planning>.

The purpose of this report is to assemble input for Forest Plan Revision received during the meeting, either verbally (as captured by staff note-takers) or on comment cards. Comments sent via email or post before or after the workshop will be assembled in a separate report.

This report was prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy with the intent to neutrally categorize and summarize the input generated at the meeting.

## **Input by topic area**

Input received at the Sierra Tribal Meeting is organized by the 5 topic areas from the preliminary “Need to Change”, plus a category for “other / overarching” input. Within each section, comments are subdivided as either **refinements** to the Need to Change, **clarifications** of text in the Need to Change, “**missing**” from the Need to Change, statements of **desired conditions** for the Forest, or **project / activity specific input**. Subcategories in each topic area are only listed if input pertaining to that subcategory was received.

No written comment cards were received at this meeting. One comment letter was received after the meeting. All comments from the letter are shown in quotation marks; diverse ideas from the comment letter appear in different topic areas as appropriate. All other input (without quotation marks) is derived from notes taken by Forest Service staff and the Tribal Liaison.

### ***1. Eastside vegetation, resilience, wildlife, invasive plants, and fire***

#### **Refinements**

- Tribes see multiple aspects. Even smoke has ecological benefits especially for acorn production. Ecological functions are very important such as fire. We need to increase emphasis on burning. Air quality needs to be put into perspective. We need to take care of our forests.

- Concern for water, wildlife, burial sites, fire decisions, etc. Who is making the decisions on what to protect? Need to burn and burn again in a few years. The Yosemite N.P.S. installed a sprinkler system around the big trees during the Rim Fire; was not a good idea.
- Consider tribal ceremonial use of fire during fire restrictions. These types of activities can still occur. Please work with the tribes.

### **Desired conditions**

- Forest is too thick with lodge pole trees. What can be done? Loggers do not want them, and they are drinking up water from other trees.
- “There would be less dense brush fields on the hillsides; the forests would be thinned in a healthy manner; dead and down fuels would be cleaned out; healthy trees and plants abound; our sacred sites / places would be cared for and left undisturbed per tribal direction / wishes / desires; the area surrounding these special areas would still have / retain their primitive / remote look to them; more animals/birds would be seen; with continued education / eradication efforts there would be less marijuana plantations on the forest along with the damage to the land because of it.”
- “During local wild land fire emergency operations, tribal leaders / members should have a say in where proposed helispots or spike camps are setup. Tribes should be able to work in a trusting relationship with USFS Leaders to accurately describe ‘special areas of concern’ that will be taken into consideration and the fire management officials could employ the necessary strategy / tactics to control the fire. This applies to prescribed fire project planning efforts also. Forests should promote use of tribal legislation like the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004 to employ local Native Americans to conduct hazardous fuel removal projects and other water shed improvement projects.”

## ***2. Wildland Urban Interface***

## ***3. Meadows***

## ***4. Aquatic and Riparian***

### **Refinements**

- At a past Sierra Tribal Forum (November 19, 2013), a presentation was conducted by the Sequoia / Kings Canyon NPS: Restoration of Native Species in High Elevation Aquatic Ecosystems Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (dated September 2013). The commenter objects to their process of killing supposedly non-native fish.

- Disagree with current management practice of destroying fish and the theory that fish were never part of the ecosystems originally or because they were brought in. Native Americans have tribal records of fish being in areas agencies are currently saying they are not native.
- Ceremonial sites at springs are being taken away from us. Access has been denied from new laws. How can we have input? Where do water rights get determined?

### **Desired conditions**

- “In the future, Tribal community members would be working the land together! Side by side with dedicated, helpful USFS EMPLOYEES and their equipment / resources; we would be joined up with other interested Volunteer groups / organizations, and interested individuals. There would be more water sources available for fire management / wildlife use; cisterns / spring boxes set up / tended in strategic areas; streams would have more fish in them; they would be working together in a safe and productive manner with good Native American role models working beside them and teaching people (young and old) in a good way using Traditional Ecological Knowledge to care for these areas / resources. We should have certain areas designated as community gardens, with dedicated water sources nearby; preferably planted with native foods (to combat diabetes in Indian country). Maybe raise animals / birds / fish for a food source (bluegill, rabbits & quail are good eating!) in an appropriate riparian area / ponds or streams that have designated fishery check-dams or rock dam locations.”

## **5. Sustainable Recreation**

### **6. Other / Overarching**

- Census data in the Assessment about Native Americans was not accurate. Tribe has very accurate data. It is important to make sure that FS uses best data.
- April thru October 2014 is a very busy time of year for Tribes and it may make it very hard to get tribal responses. It would be good to have an estimate of time requirements and expectations.
- Is there a commitment that FS will make this process truly adaptive and continue to make plan changes as they are needed?
- “The local forest District Rangers are friendly, polite and responsive. They are helpful and sincere. Their district staff members reflect a good customer service ethic and are responsive to community requests. Having the quarterly tribal forums has been helpful. It shows that the Forest leadership officials care (decision makers available) and are personally engaged in building better relationships with the original stewards of the land. Gaining quarterly updates on mutually

beneficial projects and initiatives by USFS and other federal / state / local organizations is very helpful and appreciated.”

- “Continue dialogue with key leadership officials in the tribal community; continue marketing good ideas to produce food and water resources; promote passing on of traditional cultural values via cultural resource demonstrations.”
- “Continue to have it (the plan revision process) as a regular tribal forum agenda topic — maybe think about incorporating some timely field trips with the tribal community as a way to come to agreement on which areas need to be treated first, ‘for the big picture’; dedicate time and resources to have a couple of specific successful projects to prove it’s worth their [Indians’] time and effort to participate.”
- “[Best way to communicate is] letters to multiple tribal contacts; followed up with emails; promote coordination of timely visits from local USFS Leadership officials and Forest Supervisor Office / District staff. Share maps / project design documents. Do everything in a transparent manner. Forest staff should present informative presentations to Native American Youth organizations, Tribal Employment / Training centers and Native American volunteer groups to market the Forest Plan Revision process. To build understanding and support within Indian country.”
- Tribes go to many different meetings for a wide variety of plans. Do agencies collaborate with all of these plans?
- Concern that there is no mention of the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians within the Tribal Interview document. This needs to be fixed.

### **Project / activity specific**

- “The Forest could have done a better job of having more regular meetings with tribal community members to review projects and plans. The forest should have continued beneficial relationships with Native American job employment agencies.”
- “My concern is that we’ll be asked to be a part of all this local planning; then the forest service will forget about our local combined efforts / ideas and then move onto another planning phase without any local projects getting started or completed.”
- “Once the local ‘action’ process gets moving along there will be another ‘funding redirection’ and the current local project funds will dry out and the local available resources (i.e. USFS staff / materials) will be re-directed to another ‘ecosystem restoration’ project that will get half finished and then this process will be repeated again and again but in another area and with different people.”

### **Conclusion / Major Themes**

At this Sierra Tribal Meeting, participants expressed support for active forest

management including thinning lodgepole pine and frequent burning to support ecological functions. Participants want to continue engagement on forest plan revision and to be consulted and included in planning and projects, especially to ensure forest health and protection of culturally important areas.